

Report

Saratoga National Historic Park

■ 1.0 Site Description

Saratoga National Historic Park (NHP) is the site of the first significant American military victory during the Revolutionary War. At this site in 1777 American forces met and defeated the British Army, leading France to recognize the independence of the United States and enter the war as an ally of the struggling Americans. Saratoga was first authorized as a New York State Park in 1927 and made a part of the NPS in 1938.

The Park is comprised of three separate units – the four-square-mile battlefield in Stillwater, New York, the General Philip Schuyler House eight miles north in Schuylerville and the Saratoga Monument in the village of Victory. The Park is located on the Hudson River in an area with significant natural and cultural attractions. The location of these sites and the general network of access roads to the site are shown in map below.

The Battlefield area is toured via an Auto Tour Road, a single-lane one-way road, that loops through American and British defensive positions and battle sites. The self-guided tour begins at the Park Visitor Center and consists of a nine-mile route with 10 interpretive stops along the road. The Battlefield guide, available at the Visitor Center, provides historic information corresponding to the interpretive markers along the auto tour route. The Park Visitor Center has an information desk, bookstore, and small museum. A 20-minute introductory film is also shown to orient visitors. The Visitor Center is open throughout the year. A fee of \$4.00 per vehicle is charged at the Visitor Center for access to the Auto Tour. The Tour Road is usually open from April 1 to mid-November, depending on weather conditions. Various special events are held on the grounds throughout the year.

The trail system on the Battlefield includes the Wilkinson National Historic Trail, which was developed and maintained in partnership with the Boy Scouts of America. It consists of a 4.5-mile route through some of the most significant areas associated with the Battles of Saratoga. There are also six miles of historic road traces suitable for hiking and bicycling.

The Schuyler House was the estate of General Philip Schuyler, a statesman and military leader. The British burned the original house to keep the Americans from using the house for cover. The present house was built in 1777 shortly after the American victory at Saratoga and was the center of Schuyler's farming and milling operations. The house is open from June to the Labor Day weekend. Costumed volunteers and Park staff provide guided tours of the house.

The Saratoga Monument is a 155-foot obelisk initially constructed in 1877 to commemorate the Battles of Saratoga and General Burgoyne's surrender. It was dedicated in 1912.

The interior of the monument is currently closed for renovations, although the grounds are open to the public and include informational signs relevant to the history of the structure.

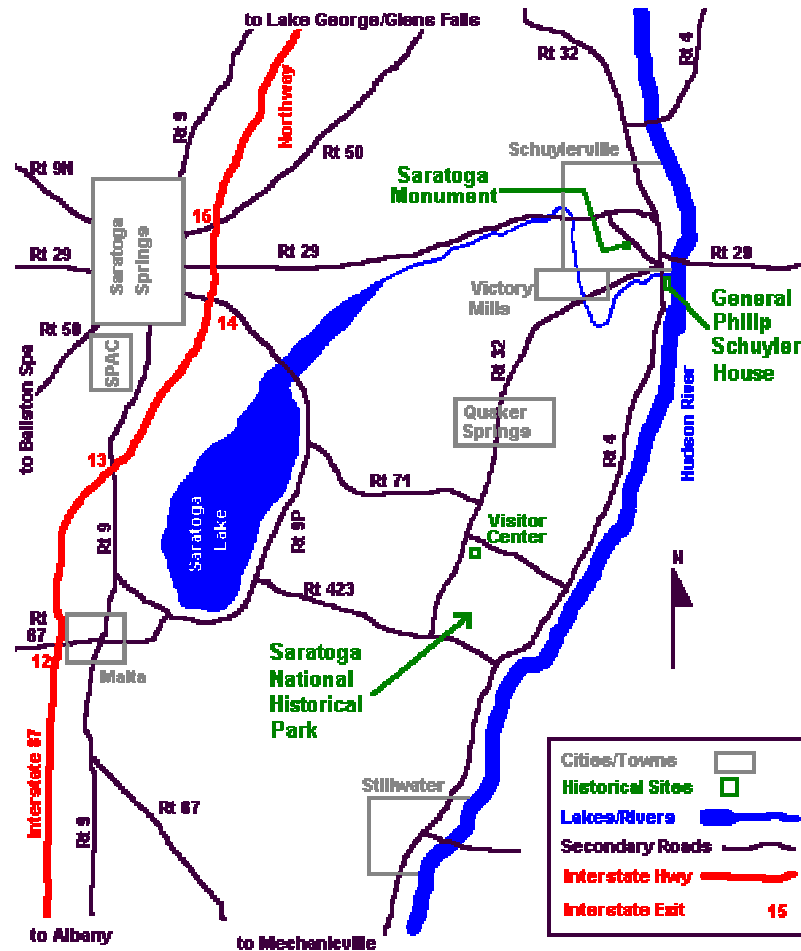
Annual Park visitation is estimated to be 250,000 visitors with the peak occurring between June and October. Visitors to the Park are interested in either historic tourism or recreational use of the Park's open space. The Superintendent indicated that the official visitation estimate is based on total vehicles entering the Park and total visitors are calculated as a multiplier of total vehicles. He noted that there are approximately 120,000 to 125,000 visitors to the Battlefield, which does not account for recreational visitors who do not stop at the Visitor Center. The Schuyler House, only open during the summer, receives 7,000 to 10,000 annual visitors. As indicated above, the Saratoga Monument is currently closed to the public. The majority of Park visitors, approximately 60 percent, are from the Capital District (Albany area).

■ 2.0 Existing ATS

Saratoga NHP is located 40 miles north of Albany and 15 miles southeast of Saratoga Springs. Interstate 87 runs to the west, approximately 11 miles from the Park. Access roads and Park entrances are shown in Figure 1. There is no public transportation serving the Park units. All transportation is by personal vehicle, foot, or bicycle. A limited number of tour buses access the Park and the existing road network and infrastructure is adequate to accommodate their needs. The nearest train service, provided by Amtrak, stops in Saratoga Springs, approximately 12 miles from the Park. A horse-and-carriage concession had previously operated at the Park but was discontinued as financially unprofitable.

The Superintendent noted that the road system within the Park is used for a variety of purposes, i.e., historic tourism and recreation. Furthermore, because the Park roads are open to the public, commuters use them to access Route 4 to the east. As a result, there are occasional conflicts between vehicles and bicyclists. Park roads are currently being renovated which will include shoulder enhancements to the Tour Road. This will help accommodate cyclists, joggers and hikers. Parking at historic sites and monuments in the Battlefield area is considered to be adequate to meet normal demand. Special events occasionally require designation of additional temporary parking areas. The Superintendent has requested funding for improvements to the parking area at the Saratoga Monument, scheduled to reopen in fall 2000.

Figure 1. Saratoga National Historic Park



■ 3.0 ATS Needs

Discussions with the Park Superintendent and Facilities Manager indicated no specific need for Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS) at this time. Routine visitation is too limited to warrant a bus or shuttle service on the Auto Tour road. The distance between the Battlefield area and the two other Park sites, in addition to lack of demand, minimize the feasibility of a shuttle to the outlying sites. Consideration is being given however to development of additional bicycle routes to connect Park facilities to regional bike routes. Currently a bike route runs between the Battlefield area and the Schuyler House. A connection between the Schuyler House and the Champlain Canal Tow Path bike route is being examined. The Tow Path bike route is being developed as a “Millennium Trail” as a joint project of the Saratoga County Heritage Trail Commission, the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT), and the New York Thruway Authority.

■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Needs

There is little apparent need for ATS at the Saratoga NHP. Given current visitation levels, an absence of congested roadway operations, and substantial distance from major population centers, ATS does not appear to offer an effective alternative to private vehicles. The most apparent related need cited by the Superintendent is for improved facilities for bicyclists to minimize conflict between cyclists and vehicles.

■ 5.0 Persons Interviewed

Doug Lindsay, Superintendent

Joe Finan, Facilities Manager